

Is COVID-19 the Result of a US Government- Funded Experiment in China?

May 16, 2020

Meryl Nass, MD, sheds light on inconvenient facts that should be considered when assessing the likely origin of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This is a contentious subject that government officials and proponents of “gain-of-function” experimentation have, as Dr. Nass writes, “circled the wagons” to insist that the pandemic emerged as a natural phenomenon.

However, their claim is disputed by an increasing number of independent analysts and investigative reporters who have examined the evidence. Critics also question the legitimacy of two US government contracts – each in the amount of \$3.7 million – to the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China.

Meryl Nass, MD has extensive expertise in biological defense and biological warfare. She investigated the world’s largest anthrax epizootic, in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and due to biological warfare.

Dr. Nass was among the first who disputed the report published in the journal *Nature Medicine* on March 17th in which the authors declared: “*We do not believe that any type of laboratory-based scenario is plausible... the definitive research supporting a natural virus origin.*”

She disputed that assertion, and identified several flawed assumptions made by the authors. She concluded that the coronavirus SARS-2 was probably created in a laboratory. * Dr. Nass is a member of the board of directors of the AHRP.

UPDATE (May 21, 2020)

***GM [Genetic Modification] Watch* cites numerous scientists who corroborate Dr. Nass’ Analysis:**

Wuhan and US Scientists Used Undetectable Methods of Genetic Engineering on Bat Coronaviruses May 20, 2020

On March 26th Dr Nass wrote the following

There are many ways the novel coronavirus may have come about:

Nature Medicine ran a 3 page **article** that claimed to explain why the novel coronavirus is not a lab construct. *USA Today* wrote a summary piece explaining it:

“If someone were seeking to engineer a new coronavirus as a pathogen, they would have constructed it from the backbone of a virus known to cause illness,” the report said. “But the scientists found that the SARS-CoV-2 backbone differed substantially from those of already known coronaviruses and mostly resembled related viruses found in bats and pangolins.”



Meryl Nass, MD

Yet it turns out to be a specious argument, relying on the fact that the novel coronavirus backbone sequence was not already known in the open virology literature.

1. While starting from a known RNA sequence is one easy way to create a pathogen, it is certainly not necessary to do so.
2. Nor is it likely that biodefense/biowarfare programs share knowledge of all their creations. They never have before.
3. a) Finally, it is relatively easy to detect the human hand when a chimera of known virulence factors is strung together.
4. b) But because plausible deniability is a critical component of a bioweapons attack, I doubt that a chimera using known sequences is the path that would have been followed by a modern biowarrior.

I will briefly mention some of the old techniques for creating bioweapons, **none of which require that a known, published RNA backbone would be required to build a novel, virulent coronavirus:**

1. China has unique bats. So do other countries. Unique bats likely harbor unique viruses. Bits of these viruses can be strung together, while no outside parties are aware that these particular RNA threads exist in nature.
 2. You take an already virulent RNA virus, subject it to high rates of mutation via chemical or radiological exposure, and test the viruses that survive for the acquisition of new virulence characteristics.
 3. You simply passage the virus through tens, hundreds or thousands of lab animals or cell cultures and test the results for acquisition of new virulence characteristics.
 4. You mix different viruses together with different virulence characteristics, allow them to grow together, and seek recombinants that have obtained the desired new mix of virulence factors.
- All these possibilities result in viruses that are hard to pin on lab production. I dare the **Nature Medicine scientists** to dismiss these scenarios.

- Still, I doubt that any national program would deliberately release this coronavirus onto the people of the earth, because it is so hard to control.

Historically, bio-weaponeers have required their creations to be controlled at all costs. In one well-documented example of biowarfare, **unleashing African swine fever on a Caribbean island** was associated with no spread beyond the island. In another, **anthrax spores were used** because they stay put– their use did not cause anthrax cases beyond the borders of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

So why do we have a coronavirus epidemic now?

An accidental biowarfare laboratory release is the best current hypothesis, in my opinion. Such accidental releases have been documented for many decades, throughout the world. But I could certainly be wrong.

On Thursday, April 2, 2020, Dr. Nass wrote:

Why are some of the US' top scientists making a specious argument about the natural origin of SARS-CoV-2?

1. I know about biological warfare/biodefense. I am the first person in the world (according to publicly available literature) to have analyzed an epidemic and demonstrated that the epidemic was due to biological warfare. See: 1992 study of the 1978-1980 Rhodesian anthrax outbreak, published in *Medicine and Global Survival*.
<https://www.ipnw.org/pdf/mgs/psr-2-4-nass.pdf>
2. Prior to genetic engineering techniques being developed (1973) and widely used (since late 1970s), more 'primitive' means of causing mutations, with the intention of developing biological weapons, were employed. Such methods were used by the Japanese beginning in the 1930s, by the US beginning in the 1940s, and by a number of other countries. They resulted in biological weapons that were tested, well-described, and in some cases, used. Such methods were also used subsequent to the 1970s.
3. These methods can result in biowarfare agents that lack the identifiable signature of a microbial agent constructed in a lab from known RNA or DNA sequences. In fact, it would be desirable to produce such agents, since it would be difficult to prove they were deliberately constructed in a lab. Here are just a few possibilities for how one might create new, virulent mutants:
 4. a) exposing microorganisms to chemical or radiological agents that cause high mutation rates and selecting for desired characteristics
 5. b) passaging virus through a number of lab animals or tissue cultures
 6. c) mixing viruses together and seeking recombinants with a new mix of virulence factors
7. Top scientists circled their wagons to protest against (what they called) "*conspiracy theories suggesting that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin.*" In a statement published in the *Lancet* March 7 (earlier online), they claimed their aim was to "*stand with*" public health professionals and scientists in China. Many who signed the statement have worked in biodefense: Rita Colwell is the former director of the National Science Foundation, and James Hughes, is the former director of CDC's National Center for Infectious Diseases, and former assistant Surgeon General.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30418-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30418-9/fulltext)

Science magazine published an **article** in support of these scientists:

*“The authors of The Lancet statement note that **scientists from several countries** who have studied SARS-CoV-2 “overwhelmingly conclude that this coronavirus originated in wildlife,” just like many other viruses that have recently emerged in humans. “Conspiracy theories do nothing but create fear, rumours, and prejudice that jeopardise our global collaboration in the fight against this virus,” the statement says.*

Five additional scientists soon claimed to provide the “scientific evidence” to back up the natural origin claim. All 5 of these scientists have worked in biodefense, have been affiliated with those who signed the *Lancet* statement, and their article was published in *Nature Medicine* on March 17, 2020. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-020-0820-9>

All of these scientists set up a straw man to knock down: they claimed that had the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) been created in a lab – *“if genetic manipulation had been performed”* – then a known coronavirus backbone would have been used. But because no known backbone forms part of SARS-CoV-2, *“the evidence shows that SARS-CoV-2 is not a purposefully manipulated virus.”*

USA Today summarized their argument as follows:

“If someone were seeking to engineer a new coronavirus as a pathogen, they would have constructed it from the backbone of a virus known to cause illness,” the report said. “But the scientists found that the SARS-CoV-2 backbone differed substantially from those of already known coronaviruses and mostly resembled related viruses found in bats and pangolins.”

Their specious claims were then supported by Dr. Francis Collins, the current director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on his [blog](#). Dr. Collins stated,

“Some folks are even making outrageous claims that the new coronavirus causing the pandemic was engineered in a lab and deliberately released to make people sick. A new study debunks such claims by providing scientific evidence that this novel coronavirus arose naturally...

this study leaves little room to refute a natural origin for COVID-19...

Finally, next time you come across something about COVID-19 online that disturbs or puzzles you, I suggest going to FEMA’s new Coronavirus Rumor Control web site...”

I am quite certain that the groups of scientists who wrote these pieces in the *Lancet* and *Nature Medicine*, as well as NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins, know that **you don’t need genetic engineering methods to create a bioweapon**. Like me, they are old, their frame of reference is a world before genetic engineering; they know the history of biowarfare, and they know the score.

- Why then are they participating in this charade?

Update April 29: *Newsweek* has been delving into “gain of function” (which means increasing the virulence of a pathogen) coronavirus research in Wuhan, China which might have contributed to the formation of SARS-CoV-2... and the interesting fact that the US government provided financial support for this research (which I posted about [here](#)). *Newsweek’s* pieces were posted April 27, and 29. My other pieces questioning the origin of SARS-CoV-2 are [here](#) and [here](#).

Many Americans look to the National Institutes of Health and other federal public health agencies for leadership on investigating matters of urgent public health concern. Unfortunately, NIH Director Francis Collins once again appears to be circling the wagons to protect powerful interests rather than the American public.

The information below is excerpted and adapted from an article by Toby Rogers, PhD, a political economist, published by **Children's Health Defense** May 8, 2020)



Toby Rogers, PhD

Background

The **U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency**, Nobel Prize winner **Luc Montagnier**, **Professor Stuart Newman**, **Dr. Michael Antoniou**, and others have raised troubling questions about the origins of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). We know that the Wuhan Institute of Virology was engaged in dangerous **gain-of-function research** involving coronaviruses from bats. The U.S. Embassy in Beijing expressed **grave concerns** about the safety practices at the Wuhan BSL-4 lab.

In spite of these concerns, the NIH **continued to fund** this research. This creates a potential political problem for NIH Director Francis Collins and NIAID Director Anthony

Fauci who provided GoF grants to the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

The mainstream keeps changing its story

First coronavirus was said to come from bats. Then it was said to come from pangolins. If an infected animal was indeed the culprit, why did it fail to infect a single person outside of the market? It could not have been infected at the market, because there were no bats that could serve as sources of infection. So, **where were all the infected people outside of Wuhan by the time SARS-CoV-2 started spreading in the market?**

Andersen et al. (2020) is saying ‘*it could be bats, it could be pangolins, but whatever it was, it wasn’t the lab.*’ Andersen contains these qualifiers: “...*it is currently impossible to prove or disprove the other theories of its origin described here.*” (p. 452). “*More scientific data could swing the balance of evidence to favor one hypothesis over another.*” The only scientifically correct way to express that idea is to state, “*we don’t know.*”

It is troubling that NIH Director Collins would attempt to claim that the case is closed when in fact the research into the origins of coronavirus has only just begun.

Andersen et al. and NHI Director Collins make extraordinary claims to know inside the minds of the researchers in Wuhan: they repeatedly make “arguments from absence.” In trying to knock down competing explanations, they write that a certain action “*has not been described*” [*in the published literature from this lab*].

There are probably LOTS of things that happen inside the Wuhan Institute of Virology that are never disclosed in published articles from the researchers at that lab (and many of the actions that **have been described** are troubling).

Dr. Collins claims that, “any bioengineer trying to design a coronavirus that threatened human health probably would never have chosen this particular conformation for a spike protein.” Is Dr. Collins a mind reader who knows exactly how every bioengineer thinks and acts at all times? Dr. Collins is engaged in conjecture here that is not supported by any evidence gathering.

“Gain-of-function research involves enhancing the host range, virulence, or transmissibility of a pathogen for the purposes of developing treatments, vaccines, or in some cases, bioweapons.”

What we actually DO know

Wuhan Institute of Virology was involved in dangerous **gain-of-function research with funding from Dr. Fauci:** One contract for \$3.7 million ran from 2014 to 2019 and another \$3.7 million contract ran from 2019 until it was cancelled on April 24, 2020 in response to public outcry.

This line of research involves increasing the “**host range, virulence, or transmissibility of a pathogen**” [or both]. The claimed purpose is for the development of treatments, such as vaccines, or in some cases, to develop bioweapons. This opens a **Pandora’s box** of practical, policy, and ethical questions.

One type of gain-of-function research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology involved **passing viruses** through several generations of animal cells. Given that, it is impossible to know whether the change in the virus came from the interaction of a virus and animal cells in the wild or the interaction of a virus and animal cells in the lab.

Wuhan Institute of Virology was using CRISPR-Cas9 technology:

CRISPR-Cas9 is another technology used for gain-of-function research and it **is used** by the Wuhan Institute of Virology. CRISPR-Cas9 does for genetics what Microsoft Word did for word processing — it enables geneticists to cut, paste, rearrange, and copy genes however they wish. These are not theoretical genetic structures on paper; CRISPR-Cas9 enables scientists to manipulate actual genetic material in the real world however they wish. Since it is possible to produce literally any genetic sequence in the lab, Collins’ (2020) insistence on natural origins is contrary to what he knows about the possibilities and dangers within his own field.

- ***they combined a SARS-like virus from bats with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and created a chimera virus capable of infecting human cells.***

Several troubling studies out of Wuhan:

In 2007 the Wuhan Institute of Virology **published a study** in the *Journal of Virology* in which they combined a SARS-like virus from bats with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and created a chimera virus capable of infecting human cells.

In 2015, researchers from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, the FDA, and the Wuhan Institute of Virology **published research** in which they took a bat virus similar to SARS, constructed a chimera virus that could infect mice, discovered that the virus was also capable of infecting “human airway cells,” and found that existing treatments for SARS were ineffective in preventing or killing this new virus. The study was so alarming to many in the scientific